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Austria votes on 28 September

On 28 September 2008 Austria will elect a new National Council (first chamber of Parliament). The resolution calling for an early general election was passed by the National Council on 9 July 2008. All five factions accepted the threeparty motion of the Austrian Social Democrats (SPÖ), the People's Party (ÖVP) and the Greens to terminate the 23rd legislative period prematurely. One day later (10 July 2008) the Council of Ministers issued a decree fixing the official election date (28 September 2008) and the election reference date (29 July 2008). This decree was endorsed by the Main Committee of the National Council. President Heinz Fischer requested the two large parties to conclude this legislative period "with dignity and style".

In line with the formal procedure, the reference day for the election has to be announced in the Federal Law Gazette of Wiener Zeitung. Three weeks after that date, the election authorities have to be set up, and the electoral registers have to be ready as from the 21st day.

About 6,350,000 Austrians are entitled to vote. The increase in the number of qualified voters from 6,107,892 in the National Council elections in 2006 is due to the fact that 16 and 17-year-olds will for the first time be admitted to vote. Postal vote is introduced, and the legislative period is extended from four to five years.

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer will not seek reelection. The top candidate of the SPÖ is party chairman designate Werner Faymann.

The ÖVP's top candidate in the campaign is Vice-Chancellor and ÖVP chief Molterer. ■

Parliament: last week of plenary sessions before the election

In the last plenary sessions of the National Council (8 to 10 July 2008) before the early election on 28 September 2008, Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer and Vice-Chancellor Wilhelm Molterer looked back on the work of the grand coalition of the past 18 months. The premature end of cooperation was due to strongly opposing views of the SPÖ and the ÖVP, e.g. regarding the Social Democrats' changed EU policy.

Chancellor Gusenbauer drew a favourable conclusion, highlighting the achievements of the

coalition, such as a decrease in unemployment, the creation of new jobs and numerous improvements for employees. Social fairness had been strengthened, and this was something the two parties could be proud of. However, other projects could not be finished: the health reform, administrative reform, guaranteed minimum incomes and the reform of the long-term care system. Gusenbauer described the fight against inflation in the fields of energy and food, the educational programme and issues related to social cohesion as the main future challenges.

The Chancellor made a clear commitment to the EU but also defended the SPÖ's new policy visà-vis the EU. The Social Democrats demanded that fundamental amendments to the EU treaties should be subject to referendums. Austria had profited from EU membership (exports tripled) and was the main beneficiary of EU enlargement. The Treaty of Lisbon was an important step ahead in the process of European integration. However, the dialogue with the citizens should be intensified. Gusenbauer stated. Among the reasons given by Vice-Chancellor Molterer for ending the coalition were irreconcilable differences concerning security and social policy issues (in particular the longterm care system, social security, combat against inflation) as well as Europe that required a clear and sharply defined policy.

The National Council adopted an amendment to the Eco-Electricity Act. Annually 21 million euros are to be earmarked for eco-electricity facilities, i.e. 4 million euros more than in the past. The term of guaranteed feed-in tariffs is extended from 11.25 to up to 20 years. Solar, wind and small hydroelectric power plants will, for example, be subsidised.

Furthermore, amendments to tighten the Tobacco Act (separate areas for non-smokers and smokers on premises with a surface of more than 80m²) and the Anti-Doping Act as well as to raise educational standards were adopted. ■

Gertrude Brinek is new Ombudswoman

ÖVP member of Parliament Gertrude Brinek was unanimously elected Ombudswoman in the plenary session of the National Council on 10 July 2008, succeeding to incumbent Minister of the Interior Maria Fekter. ■

Gusenbauer: the EU needs answers to the problems of the people

Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer presented his views on Europe in a guest commentary for the renowned daily "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" (FAZ; 10 July 2008) and explained why the SPÖ changed its EU policy, calling for referendums on fundamental changes of the EU treaties.

Since the Irish 'no' to the Treaty of Lisbon a heated debate over the future development of EU integration has been sparked off. The general tenor of almost all commentaries was that the EU was unfit for the direct democratic involvement of the population. The issue was too complex, the interests too diverse, and the populists were overly powerful. "This attitude questionable in several respects as it is not only short-sighted in political terms but above all in contrast to the European reality", Gusenbauer stated. There was no other policy area subject to a greater number of referendums in Europe than the EU and its further development. Two thirds of the 15 referendums held on changes of the EU treaties (since 1986) had outcomes approving the new legal basis. "Even with regard to the controversial Constitutional Treaty one should not forget that besides the negative referendums in France and the Netherlands Spain and Luxembourg had asked their voters and that an overwhelming majority voted in favour of the Constitution", the Chancellor stressed.

Gusenbauer vehemently rejects "conspiracy theories about the sinister motives of the yellow press" or "insulting the population" as it happened particularly after the referendum in Ireland. Europe should not become "a special preserve for the knowers" and become immune to criticism. "Undoubtedly the EU could be further developed rather smoothly in the (...) inner circle of experts with the active support of some skilled lobbyists; however, there is a serious risk of ending up without Europeans", the Federal Chancellor stated.

"The European Union is a political construct that is rightfully judged by the Europeans based on the answers it offers to their (...) problems." According to Gusenbauer, increased information alone will not do. Obviously, a lack of information provided "fertile ground for the spreading of populist propaganda instilling fear",

but the unquestioned belief in European unification" reduced European policy into a "discussion-free zone periodically acclaiming developments in Brussels, seemingly without enjoying the support of any identifiable political players".

Therefore credible answers had to be offered to the desires and problems of the people. Gusenbauer was convinced that an "honest discussion with the country's population will not have adverse effects on the concept 'Europe' or the reputation of politics".

The Federal Chancellor affirmed his commitment to a European policy encompassing all aspects of democratic participation: "In our opinion, a continuous, open and engaged political debate on Europe should imply that fundamental changes of the EU treaties will be subject to referendums also in Austria; eventually such a referendum will be a test how convincing and credible our arguments are for the further development of Europe". Nothing had changed with regard to the favourable attitude of the SPÖ to the Lisbon Treaty, Chancellor Gusenbauer stated.

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer pays visit to Ukraine

Federal Chancellor Alfred Gusenbauer paid an official visit to Ukraine from 8 to 9 July 2008. He discussed subjects such as economic cooperation with Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko in Kiev. Austria is the fourth largest investor of Ukraine.

Meeting of European ministers of the interior in Vienna

After a meeting of the Salzburg Forum at Vienna's Hofburg on 17 July 2008 Minister of the Interior Maria Fekter explained that regional police cooperation with the states of Central and South Eastern Europe is to be strengthened. Moreover, all member states had agreed that security could be guaranteed only by cooperating closely with all partners and neighbours.

The ministers of the interior of 15 Central and South Eastern European countries participated in the deliberations on migration and security issues. ■

Federal Chancellor Gusenbauer: "Precisely because we are fully committed to the most successful peace and wealth project in European history and precisely because the EU offers a framework for political action allowing constructive responses to the major global concerns of the future, we first have to meet the challenge how to cope with the growing scepticism of the Europeans."

New youth employment package against shortage of skilled workers

On 17 July 2008 Minister of Economic Affairs Martin Bartenstein and the social partners agreed on a new youth employment package to support companies training apprentices. 265 million euros will be made available in the period up to 2010. A main goal of the package is to counteract the threatening shortage of skilled workers. The programme will end on 31 December 2010, that is shortly before opening the domestic labour market to foreign workers on 1 May 2011.

The package focuses quality-related on subsidies. Technology-oriented enterprises funding costly training will receive higher subsidies than for example hairdressers or catering companies. The new subsidy will be calculated on the basis of the income, i.e. the apprenticeship pay. The previous bonus of 1000 euros per apprentice and year granted to training companies will be abolished. A stepped basic subsidy will enter into force retroactively. For new apprenticeship contracts all companies will receive as from 28 June 2008 an amount corresponding to three times the apprenticeship pay in the first year, double the amount in the second year as well as the equivalent amount in the third and fourth years.

The previous Blum bonus granted by the Public Employment Service (AMS) to promote the creation of additional training positions is replaced by the new Blum bonus II. Now, a bonus of 2000 euros is paid for newly created positions. However, only start-up companies recruiting apprentices in the first five years as well as companies training apprentices for the first time or after an interruption of at least three years will be entitled to the bonus. The apprenticeship must last for at least one year.

The newly introduced quality bonus is to provide another incentive to companies to take on apprentices. Applications for this subsidy amounting to 3000 euros may be filed after half of the training period has been completed. The apprentice has to pass a practical test and the company has to submit a training documentation. The new subsidy scheme also provides for measures geared to the needs of apprentices with learning difficulties. Financial aid will, for example, be granted towards private tuition.

Austrian economy grew by 3.1 percent in 2007

In 2007 the Austrian economy grew by 3.1% percent in real terms. Hence, the country's economic performance remained below the level forecast by economic analysts. The Economic Research Institute (Wifo) and the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) had expected a real growth of 3.4%.

According to the official data of the Austrian Statistical Office (Statistik Austria) of 14 July 2008, real growth of 3.1% in 2007 was three tenth below the rate predicted and the rate posted in 2006. The nominal growth rate (not adjusted for inflation) of 5.3% is the same as that of 2006. Last year the production of physical goods recorded a marked increase of 5.5% in real terms but failed to reach the estimated level. Financial service providers such as banks and insurance companies also showed a slightly weaker performance. A real plus of 4.3% was recorded in manufacturing, while the services sector grew by 2.5% in real terms. Exports were once more the growth engine. As in the past years, the exports of goods and services rose by 10.8% in nominal terms and by 8.8% in real terms.

The gross capital expenditure also grew by 4.7% in real terms from the level of 2006. Consumption by private households increased in nominal terms by only 3.1% and by 0.9% in real terms

The gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices increased by 13.5 billion euros to about 270.8 billion euros in 2007. The GDP per capita amounted to 32,570 euros (+4.8%).

The domestic debate is clearly dominated by the recent record inflation. In Austria inflation was running at 3.9% in June (EU: 4.3%), reaching a new all-time high after 15 years. It has been driven mainly by soaring fuel, heating oil and food prices. However, "homemade" factors were responsible for more than one third of the higher cost of living in Austria, the experts of the Competition Committee underlined. ■

Vienna Airport: almost 13 percent increase in passengers

In the first half of 2008 Vienna Airport recorded an increase in passengers by 12.8% to 9.7 million travellers. ■

The new quality bonus for successfully trained apprentices amounts to 3000 euros. An extra reward of 200 euros is granted for passing apprenticeship leaving exams with excellent and good marks.

Friedrich Kiesler Prize to Toyo Ito

The 2008 Friedrich Kiesler Prize for Architecture and Art goes to Japanese architect Toyo Ito. The award has been granted biennially since 1998 on an alternating basis by the Republic of Austria and the City of Vienna for "outstanding achievements in architecture and the arts reflecting the experimental and innovative views of Friedrich Kiesler and his theory of correlated arts. The award ceremony will take place at Vienna's City Hall on 16 October 2008. Besides, this is the first time a prize-winner holds a lecture at the Technical University (TU) of Vienna.

As the Vienna Kiesler Foundation informed, the international jury paid tribute to Ito as an architect who "explores fundamental architectural issues from the perspective of their socio-cultural effects regardless of prevailing fashions and trends". Since the 1990s Toyo Ito has responded to the "challenge of creating a new link between architecture and nature, beyond modernist concepts".

Toyo Ito was born in Korea (then annexed by Japan) in 1941 and finished his studies of architecture at Tokyo University in 1965. He worked for "Kiyonori Kikutake Architect and Associate" until 1969 and founded his own firm in 1971. In the beginning he designed numerous private houses but soon earned a reputation as a conceptual visionary blending physical and virtual realities. Buildings by Toyo Ito can for example be found in Tokyo, Taiwan, Singapore, London and Frankfurt.

Franz Koglmann receives Ernst Krenek Prize of the City of Vienna

Austrian composer and jazz musician Franz Koglmann receives the 2008 Ernst Krenek Prize. The independent jury selected him as the winner of the award granted by the City of Vienna every two years for his work "Nocturnal Walks/ Nächtliche Spaziergänge" premiered in Sibiu (German name: Hermannstadt, Romania) in May 2007. The Brukenthal Foundation had commissioned Koglmann to compose this work for Sibiu as the European cultural capital in 2007. The premiere with the exxj ensemble xx. jahrhundert, conducted by Peter Burwik, with trumpet and flügelhorn soli by the composer,

staged in the Protestant church of Sibiu and the following performance in the summer palace of Samuel von Brukenthal in Avrig (German name: Freck) were a great success both with the audience and the press. Brukenthal (1721-1803) - a representative of the Enlightenment movement and Freemason - was a close advisor of Empress Maria Theresa and later became Governor of Transylvania (1777-1787). The economic, multi-ethnical and cultural development of this region was decisively shaped by this outstanding Transylvanian Saxon. After WWII. the score of Joseph Haydn's Symphony No. 27 in G major was found in Avrig. It also became known as the "Symphony of Sibiu/Hermannstadt". Based on a fascinating idea, Franz Koglmann blended motifs of Haydn's work with the German-speaking voice of Émile Michel Cioran (1911-1995). Cioran was born near Sibiu, published aphorisms and later moved to Paris. He suffered from a chronic sleeping disorder and often walked through the nights. This composition, whose ephemeral elegance reminds of Gil Evans' cooperation with Miles Davis, is a true Koglmann, i.e. another work between European avant-garde and jazz.

Today Franz Koglmann (born in Mödling near Vienna in 1947) is considered the innovator of the "Third Stream". His numerous works, among them the opera "Fear Death by Water", were produced by labels such as HAT HUT, between the lines, Handsemmel and col legno. With his various ensembles, he performed at many festivals around the world. His commissioned compositions were performed and recorded not only by Peter Burwik but also by his colleagues Sylvain Cambreling, Dennis Russell Davies, Gustav Bauer, Emilio Pomarico.

Koglmann has received numerous prizes in the past, e.g. the Prize of the City of Vienna and the prestigious Hans Koller Prize. ■

Opera Klosterneuburg near Vienna: Mozart's/Da Ponte's "Don Giovanni"

If the weather is fine, a wonderful evening is guaranteed. the opera "Don Giovanni" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart is performed in the imperial courtyard of the Convent of Klosterneuburg, Lower Austria (running until 2 August 2008). The intriguing and elegant costumes (by Clarisse Praun-Maylunas) match the stage

2008 Friedrich Kiesler Prize to Toyo Ito: www.kiesler.org www.toyo-ito.com

Double CD tip:
Koglmann-Haydn:
Nocturnal
Walks/Symphony
No. 27 in G major.
exxj, led by Peter
Burwik. Haydn
Orchestra from
Bolzano and
Trient, conducted
by Gustav Kuhn.
2007 col legno:
www.collegno.com

Wiener Musik Galerie: www.wmg.at

Book tip: E.M. Cioran, Cahiers 1957– 1972. Frankfurt/M. 2001. ISBN 3518412744

www.operklostern eubura.at design, squares reminding of blinds in different shades of black (by Hans Kudlich). Julian Pölsler's production is fast-paced, has dazzling effects and clearly defined characters. The hotblooded Klemens Sander seems to be the ideal choice to play the seductive Don Giovanni. Steffen Rössler enacting his struggling and cunning servant Leporello is also outstanding. The ladies do their part in providing eye and ear candy. Netta Or as Donna Anna with her soprano heightens the dramatic action. Annely Peebo with her intense stage presence as Donna Elvira and Ana Puche Rosado as graceful Zerlina are not less praiseworthy.

Central European art at Esterházy Palace in Eisenstadt

Contemporary art from Central and Eastern Europe is presented for the second time at Esterházy Palace in Eisenstadt (Burgenland). The premiere of "Central Europe Revisited I" in summer 2007 was highly successful, registering 5,500 visitors. Young artists from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Czech Republic, from Hungary and Austria put an exciting mix of painting, drawing, object and video art as well as photography before the public. The works of art selected are to illustrate formally new tendencies in art and reflect the current every-day lives in the respective countries.

The name Esterházy is closely related to the history and culture of Central Europe. The palace is one of the most important cultural centres of the region "Pannonia". European music history is inseparably associated with Prince Nikolaus I. of Esterházy, the most important patron of Joseph Haydn over many decades.

In 2007 the Esterházy family resumed its tradition of devoting itself not only to the conservation of historical cultural assets but also to contemporary art.

Austria-Japan Year 2009: 140 years of diplomatic relations

The year 2009 will be marked by the 140th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Austria and Japan. On 8 July 2008 the logo (a red-white-red combination between the Japanese sun symbol and the Austrian flag) as well as the main items of the comprehensive programme

were presented at the Japanese Information and Cultural Centre in Vienna. In the economic and cultural areas the spotlight is to be turned on innovation. The exhibition "Innovative Austria" of the Vienna Technical Museum and a media art presentation of the Linz-based Ars Electronica Center (together with the ICC Tokyo) are for example in the planning stage. A total of about 100 projects are in the pipeline, e.g. an "Austria Ski Fiesta" in Japanese winter sports regions, the show "150 years of Austrian architecture", held in Tokyo and curated by Gustav Peichl.

Another key element of the events organised in the framework of the Austria-Japan Year is tourism. Japan is Austria's largest tourists' country of origin in East Asia and the second most important overseas market after the USA. The aim is to position Austria in Japan not only as a traditional but increasingly also as an innovative holiday destination offering a lot more than Mozart, Empress "Sisi" Elisabeth and the Lipizzaner horses.

Wittgenstein Prize of the research community to Ernst Steinkellner

The 2008 Ludwig Wittgenstein Prize of the Austrian research community goes to the founder and longstanding head of the Department for Tibetology and Buddhist Studies of Vienna University, Ernst Steinkellner, 70. The award, which should not be confused with the Wittgenstein Prize granted by the Federal Ministry of Science and Research, is conferred "for a special reason but in any case not more often than once a year" in acknowledgement of the excellent achievements of a person or an outstanding academic work.

Ernst Steinkellner, born in Graz in 1937, first studied German and English language in his hometown, then he changed both the subject and the university. He finished his Ph.D. in Indology in Vienna in 1963. After completing his "Habilitation" (qualifying paper for lecturing) in 1967, he started teaching at the University of Pennsylvania (USA) in 1971. In 1973 he was called to Vienna University, where he founded the Department for Tibetology and Buddhist Studies. He headed the Department until 2000 and remained active also after its merger into to Institute of South Asian, Tibet and Buddhist Studies. Steinkellner retired in 2006. In 1977 the

Central Europe Revisited II. Up to 2 November 2008 at the Esterházy Palace in Eisenstadt: www.esterhazy.at

In preparation: www.japan-austria2009.org

www.austriajapan2009.org scholar founded the series of monographs "Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde" (Viennese Studies on Tibet and Buddhism), which currently comprises 70 volumes. As a member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW), he headed the ÖAW's Institute for the Study of Asian Cultural and Intellectual History from 1998 to 2006. Thanks to an agreement between the ÖAW and the Chinese Tibet Research Centre in Beijing, Steinkellner gained access to about 4,000 Sanskrit manuscripts in Tibet. The study of these manuscripts ushers in a new era in the research on Indian Buddhism.

Parndorf: "Astoria" to mark Jura Soyfer's 70th death anniversary

Exquisite summer theatre has been offered in front of the church of Parndorf (Burgenland) for many years. To mark the forthcoming 70th death anniversary of Jura Soyfer, the Parndorf Summer Theatre Festival presents Soyfer's classic "Astoria" (from 24 July to 17 August 2007). Soyfer died in the Buchenwald concentration camp in 1939 aged 26 and is one of the most important political writers of Austria. His plays combined the tradition of the Viennese Popular Play, as authored by Raimund, Nestroy and Horváth, with the didactic tone of Brecht. In his third play, the author questioned the concept of the "motherland" - a question Austria faced since 1918. "Astoria" is a non-existent country where suffering was said to have been abolished. It is also the object of the hopes and dreams of the protagonists. This "country" had been invented by a bum, who suddenly earned real money by speculating on the stock exchange. At the end of the play the actors sing its praises while being taken to prison. The (socio-) political connections between "Astoria" and Jura Soyfer's increasingly cruel reality are obvious.

President Heinz Fischer opens Carinthian Summer Festival

On 11 July 2008 Federal President Heinz Fischer opened the Carinthian Summer Festival at the Convent of Ossiach (Carinthia), which is held every year in Ossiach and Villach. President Fischer hailed the cultural festival as a beacon sending a highly visible signal to the region,

where the new and unusual is promoted proactively, e.g. numerous contemporary compositions. Up to 31 August 2008 45 events are presented, including no less than eight world premiers and nine local premiers. The programme was opened with the world premiere of John Tavener's church opera "Mary of Egypt".

25th anniversary of ImPulsTanz Wien

This year the festival "ImPulsTanz Wien" celebrates its 25th anniversary. President Heinz Fischer and his wife Margit were captivated by the special dance performance given at Vienna Hofburg. Among the guests was choreographer Ismael Ivo, who had initiated the "International Dance Weeks Vienna" together with cultural manager Karl Regensburger in 1984. As a 25th anniversary gift, the most famed choreographers and dance companies from all over the world and Austria present the most beautiful and daring dance performances at various venues, e.g. Vienna Burgtheater. But the festival is not only a showcase for established dance art. The "Prix Jardin d'Europe", a prize for talented newcomers, is awarded for the first time this year. The trophy was designed by Erwin Wurm.

Lockenhaus: La Musique Française

Gidon Kremer – and his friends – are always good at creating the unique for the Lockenhaus Chamber Music Festival (Burgenland). This year's focus is on "la musique française", e.g. by composers César Franck, Francis Poulenc, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel and Olivier Messiaen. The New York Times named Lockenhaus as one to the two best festivals in the world having become European cultural heritage and whose programme was clearly inspiring at international level.

Herbert Grönemeyer in Klagenfurt

Singer and actor ("Das Boot/The Submarine") Herbert Grönemeyer, 51, gave the only concert in Austria of his "tour 12" – named after his latest, prize-winning album – at the new EURO08 Wörthersee Stadium in Klagenfurt (Carinthia) on 18 July 2008. The charismatic star born in Göttingen (Germany) was cheered by more than 26,000 fans. ■

Wittgenstein Prize 2008 goes to Ernst Steinkellner: 11 October, 11.00 a.m. festive hall of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (ÖAW). 1010 Vienna, Dr. Ignaz Seipel-Platz 2. This is also the venue of a symposium "Does Asia think differently?"; 10 October, 1 p.m. to 7 p.m.

www.impulstanz.c om

Summer theatre in the church square of Parndorf: Jura Soyfer's "Astoria". From 24 July to 17 August 2008: www.kulturparndo rf.at

A comprehensive report on Jura Soyfer's life and oeuvre was provided in "20 years of Jura Soyfer Society" in "News from Austria, no. 13/08".

www.kammermusi kfest.at New strategy up to 2012 for Austrian association Sporthilfe

The Austrian association Sporthilfe is one of the financial pillars ensuring that our athletes are fit for the competition with more than 200 nations, especially in the Olympic and Paralympic Games taking place in 18 days. Between the Olympic Summer Games in Athens in 2004 and the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008, the Austrian Olympians were supported with more than 20,000 euros from the coffers of Sporthilfe. So far impressive results have been achieved: a total of 10,000 athletes was granted financial aid, and 77 Olympic medals were won! This successful path is to be continued up to 2012 by pursuing the Sporthilfe strategy. In view of the 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver and the 2012 Olympic Summer Games in London, the ongoing work has been analysed so as to be able to adjust policies. To make Austrian sport more successful, Sporthilfe will in the future grant even more targeted, efficient and demandoriented support tailored to the development cycles of the athletes. While the policy of individual support programmes is continued, priority will be given to measures outside the sphere of sports. Sporthilfe offers various programmes preparing for the life phase after the career, such as the WIFI Sporthilfe Academy or "Karriere:Danach". These initiatives are to be further developed. Sporthilfe enjoys a good reputation but public awareness can still be raised by targeted communication measures, e.g. by involving important personalities. Another strategy consists in strengthening marketing by issuing the Sporthilfe magazine "sporthilfe.at". ■

Cycling: victory of the "transparent athlete" Thomas Rohregger

Thomas Rohregger's overall victory at the 60th Austrian cycling tour is a double victory in two ways. After having been ranked second last year, this is certainly the highlight in Rohregger's career. At the same time, this result is a 'clean' victory for the Austrian sport. Acting as a "transparent athlete" for the joint antidoping project of the Secretariat of State for Sport and the Austrian Cycling Association (Österreichischer Radsportverband /ÖRV), Thomas Rohregger scored the victory in the most

important domestic cycling race. This strong sign of life of the Austrian cycling sport gives some cause for optimism with regard to the Olympic Games. Besides the Tyrolian Rohregger, the executive board of the ÖRV also nominated Styrian Christian Pfannberger for the men's road race of the Olympic Games in Beijing. Bernhard Kohl from Lower Austria, who is currently creating a great sensation at the Tour de France and competes as the second overall for the final overall victory, rejected the nomination so as to be able to concentrate fully on the Tour's final stage on 27 July 2008. In April 2007 the "transparent athlete" - an initiative of the State Secretariat for Sport in cooperation with the cycling team "NÖ RadUnion" (founded in 2003 by ex-world champ Franz Stocher) and the IMSB-Austria - was launched to prove that success in elite sports is possible without doping. The ÖRV participated in further developing the association's project for the professional cycling sport with five Austrian top riders. It plans to kick off a comprehensive and country-wide project in 2009. ■

Tour revelation Kohl became second overall after 15th stage

Only seven seconds separated Bernhard Kohl on Sunday from becoming the Austrian top sports sensation. The 26-year old professional cyclist from Wolkersdorf/Lower Austria missed the leader's yellow jersey by only seven seconds in the 15th stage of the Tour de France. As the second overall behind the new number one Fränk Schleck from Luxembourg, Kohl earned the reddotted jersey for the best climber (status: 20 July 2008). He is the first Austrian to wear the reddotted jersey. "The climber's jersey and second overall in the Tour the France, I still can't believe it, it is incredible", the ÖRV's national champion of the road race in 2006 stated. The only Austrian ever wearing the yellow jersey had been Max Bulla in 1931. ■

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